

# REGIONAL EQUITY INDICATORS REPORT

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO



FISCAL YEAR

**2022-2023**

*“Not everything that is faced can be changed,  
but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”*

– James Baldwin

## Land Acknowledgement

Any look at equity in San Diego County should begin by acknowledging the presence and wisdom of indigenous peoples who are the original stewards of this land. This is a first and vital step toward reckoning with the history of colonialism, slavery and racialized oppression.

In recognition of and respect for indigenous peoples as traditional stewards of the land that we now call the County of San Diego. For millennia, the Kumeyaay people have been a part of this land. This land has nourished, healed, protected, and embraced them for many generations in a relationship of balance and harmony. As members of the San Diego community, and inhabitants of Ma’at Tipai/Kumeyaay Territory, we acknowledge this legacy. We promote this balance and harmony. We find inspiration from this land; the land of the Kumeyaay.

# Executive Summary

The County of San Diego is dedicated to creating a more equitable and just world. It acknowledges past injustices and current structural barriers to equality and is actively working to repair the harm to our communities. This Equity Indicators report is one of the many steps the County is taking to address inequity. It identifies impacts of racism and other forms of oppression. It can empower all of us to create strategies to help eliminate inequity. Centuries of discriminatory policies and practices have been woven into the fabric of this country. They have created and perpetuated inequity in many parts of life, including health, safety, education, wealth, and social mobility. People in America can unfairly be less healthy, less safe, less educated, earn less and achieve less just because of their race and ethnicity, gender, immigration status, disability, class and even geography.

The County of San Diego commits itself to working with everyone to co-create solutions that will improve life outcomes for all people and to team up with all sectors of government, nonprofit organizations, businesses, people and community groups. Dismantling unjust structures is not just the morally right thing to do. It can also unlock the economic potential of people who have been systematically held back, foster belonging across communities and energize neighborhoods. That benefits us all.

This report shows data at a single point in time, generally for the year 2021, but these disparities are the result of long-term trends that are expected to change slowly as attitudes, policies, and systems change. Below are key highlights for San Diego County from each area:

1. Related to **communities and civic life** in 2021, there was less racial/ethnic diversity in the coastal and eastern parts of the county than the central parts of the county. Eligible voters were more likely to be registered in eastern and north coastal parts of the county than central parts of the county as well. Minority-owned businesses and female-owned businesses were underrepresented in the county in 2017 (most recent data at time of report development).
2. In **early childhood development**, Hispanic and Black public-school students were overrepresented among homeless youth in academic year 2021-2022, and youth poverty was unequally distributed by race, disability, and immigration status in 2021. Most notably, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, and Black or African American children experienced poverty at more than twice the rate of White children in San Diego County. In 2019 (the most recent date data were available at the time of report development), 63% of adults had experienced one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) before the age of 18. ACEs were highest among males, non-Hispanic Other Races, non-Hispanic Whites, and Hispanics compared to the county overall.

3. In **education**, wide disparities existed among students by race, gender, disability status, and economic status in standardized testing in academic year 2021-2022, but students in the county overall outperformed their peers in California. There were also unequal graduation rates in academic year 2021-2022 and differences in 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in school in 2021 by race, disability, and immigrant status. In the academic year 2021-2022, Hispanic or Latino, African American, and American Indian or Alaska Native students were overrepresented in suspensions compared to their total enrollment. Across K-12 public school students, about 17% of English Language Learners had Level 4 proficiency, the highest level, in English, meaning they had well-developed listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills.
4. **Food systems** disparities were also evident across race, sex, disability, immigration status, and geography. The race/ethnicity differences in food insecurity in 2021 were stark. Black or African American people were more than three times as likely to be enrolled in SNAP than White people and twice as likely than county residents overall. In 2019, the most recent data available at the time of report development, many areas of the county had very low to low grocery access.
5. Differences in **health** outcomes among groups are found beginning at birth—low birthweight was twice as common among births to Black or African American mothers when compared to births to White mothers in 2021. Life expectancy at birth varied by gender and race, with a 9.8-year gap between the lowest and highest life expectancies by race. More than a quarter of census tracts in 2021 experienced a mental health, dental health, or primary care shortage. Compared to White residents, American Indian or Alaska Natives were five times more likely to be uninsured, Hispanic or Latinos more than three times more likely, and Black or African Americans twice more likely.
6. In **housing**, White and Asian households were twice as likely to own their homes as Black or African American households in 2021. Additionally, Black or African American households were more likely to spend more than half of their income toward housing compared to other households. In 2022, the number of people experiencing homelessness was highest in the city of San Diego, followed by Oceanside, Chula Vista, and El Cajon.
7. **Infrastructure** disparities were also present in 2021. A greater percentage of Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Some Other Race people reported not having high-speed internet access at home compared to White people. A disabled worker was twice as likely to take public transportation than a non-disabled worker. Eastern parts of the county had the longest commute times, particularly in comparison to coastal areas.
8. Among some of the starkest disparities were access to opportunity through **jobs and finances**. In 2021, about 27% of people with disabilities participated in the labor force,



compared to 72% of non-disabled people. Black or African American and disabled people had the lowest employment rates of those participating in the labor force. There were marked disparities in poverty by race, gender, disability, and immigration status. Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander and Some Other Race people, disabled residents, and immigrants were more likely to be below 200% of the federal poverty level than county residents overall. Further, about 36% of residents did not make a self-sufficient wage in 2021. In 2022, about 20% of households had any debt in collections, and across all debt types, communities of color were more likely to have debt in collections than majority White communities.

9. There were also disparities with access to **parks** and quality of **natural resources** across the county in 2021. Of eight air quality monitoring stations in the county, Alpine had the lowest percentage of “Good” air quality days related to Ozone, and El Cajon and Otay Mesa had the lowest percentage of “Good” air quality days related to particulate matter <2.5 microns. About 53% of San Diego County residents had adequate access to parks or community spaces, and South County beaches were disproportionately affected by beach closures.
10. When looking at **crime and the legal system** in 2021, violent crime rates were highest in National City and Lemon Grove and property crime rates were highest in Del Mar and National City. There were 89 hate crimes in the county recorded in 2021. Seventy-one percent (71%) of hate crimes were motivated by race and almost 50% of the racially motivated hate crimes were anti-Black or anti-African American. In the cities of San Diego and Carlsbad, Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino people were overrepresented in traffic stops, though the opposite was true for the San Diego County Sheriff’s Department. The San Diego County Sheriff’s Department had the highest juvenile arrest rate followed by police departments in El Cajon, National City, and Escondido. The per capita incarceration rate of Black or African American people was greater than that of White people, and the incarceration rates of Hispanic or Latinos and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders were almost twice that of Whites.

This report will hopefully complement other publicly available data and catalyze action in the region, making it a better place to live, work and thrive for all. The information in this report will be used to build consensus among regional governments and agencies on the importance of equity and to foster collaboration on improving outcomes.